



**COMMUNICATE YOUR
BOUNDARIES
IN 3 SIMPLE STEPS**

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What are Boundaries?

Welcome! I'm so glad you've taken this step to hone your boundary-setting skills because, let's be honest, setting boundaries is usually harder than it looks. That's why I've developed this quick guide to help you speak your boundaries to the people nearest and dearest to you. But first, it's vital that we define what boundaries actually are.

In a nutshell, boundaries are your personal rules of engagement. These are the standards that others need to adhere to in order to have access to you. And there are different levels of access that people can have to you, which means you'll probably have slightly different boundaries for different people in your life (i.e. co-workers versus romantic partners).

Boundaries are meant to protect your body, mind, and overall well-being. An example of a boundary designed to protect your body would be '**Others cannot stand near me with a loaded weapon**'. This one is pretty obvious, right? You're protecting our own physical safety.

But there are other more nuanced boundaries that we can use to protect our emotional well-being, such as '**Others cannot call me in the middle of the night to talk about their problems**'. You have a right to uninterrupted sleep, so set your phone to silent when you go to bed.

Boundaries also apply to how we treat ourselves. It is vital that we practice healthy internal boundaries, such as avoiding the news right before

bedtime, or not following people on Instagram if their feed makes us feel crappy about ourselves.

Now that we understand the fundamentals of boundaries, let's get started with learning how to communicate these boundaries to others.

Just like any other skill, you will get better with practice. I recommend that you start by scripting out what you want to say by following the steps below. Then try speaking them aloud to yourself for practice. When you're ready, use these 3 points to communicate your boundary. So, let's get started!

Step #1: Describe the problem behavior that you see happening

It's important to start by describing the behavior that is currently happening that you no longer want to see or be exposed to. For example, maybe your co-worker keeps dropping by your desk and chatting endlessly when you have deadlines to meet.

Addressing this might sound like:

"I've noticed that we end up chatting a lot during the workday, but I'm feeling really pressured to meet certain deadlines. I don't think I have time to socialize so much during the workday."

Step #2: Describe the behavior you want to see instead

In my opinion, this is the most important step. As humans we tend to focus on communicating what we **don't** want instead of what we **do** want.

In the case of your chatty co-worker, saying what we don't want might look like:

"Please don't drop by my desk to talk during the day".

But a more positive framing would sound like:

"I think it would be better if we catch up during lunch or after work instead of during work hours."

Step #3: Describe how you'll respond if the behavior doesn't change

I want to highlight that this step isn't always necessary or appropriate when initially setting boundaries. But it's very necessary in situations where we need to set a firm boundary immediately. I would encourage you **not** to wait in cases where your personal space or rights are being violated.

But when it comes to negotiating a less pressing issue, you may not need this strategy immediately. For example, you may have noticed that your partner forgets to complete chores that they've agreed to do. In this case, your boundary may be that you want people in your inner circle to follow through on their commitments to you, so you may start by using the first

two steps above to communicate the desired change, and then invite them to brainstorm ways of fixing the behavior. The other person's buy-in will almost always make the behavior change more sustainable.

But you may find that the behavior continues even after giving this invitation, which means that it's time to use step 3 to explain how you plan to uphold your boundary. In which case, you must decide and communicate what you'll do when the boundary is violated.

You may decide that you'll expect them to complete the chores before going to bed instead of allowing them to promise to do them later. If they've already forgotten once, they're likely to forget again. Therefore, you're letting them know that – although it may not feel like a convenient time for them (right before bed), they've had plenty of time to take action and now there is a time limit in place.

This could be communicated in the following way:

“We recently talked about my concern that you may be forgetting to do some of the tasks around the house that you’ve committed to doing. I’ve asked you to find a better way of keeping on top of your commitments, but the dishes still aren’t done. I would like for you to do them before getting into bed. Thank you.”

Sounds reasonable enough, right? Bear in mind, this isn't a guarantee that the person will meet your need or desire. But that can be addressed with additional work around setting healthy boundaries for yourself, which involves addressing ongoing patterns and deciding if you want to accept them or change the terms of the relationship.

Now let's try applying step 3 to that chatty co-worker. Let's assume they keep coming by your desk at all hours despite your conversation around this boundary.

Your new conversation may go like this:

"It looks like we're still finding ourselves talking at all hours of the workday. I really need to focus on my work deadlines so, moving forward, I'll cue you that I can't talk if you drop by during work hours."

There are many different ways that you could phrase this, but the point is the same: if you can't remember my boundary, I will remind you.

You may also find that you need to physically remove yourself in certain situations. For example, I have many adolescent clients who hear complaints from one parent about the other parent. In this case, the child has the option to ask their parent not to speak about the other parent to them. If their parent does not listen to this boundary, I encourage the child to leave the room or the conversation. Although this strategy is very uncomfortable, it is sometimes the only way that we can shield ourselves from unhealthy behaviors and communicate the seriousness of our boundaries.

I hope that you've found this guide helpful for communicating some of your boundaries. If you're ready for some more personalized attention, I also offer individual coaching services. Book your first 30-min session for **free** at www.tatianathompson.com. No matter your journey, I'm so glad you've joined us here. Keep following for more helpful tips to heal your relationship patterns and have deeply satisfying connections with the people in your life.

About Tatiana



I'm a personal life coach and a licensed counselor, practicing in Arizona. I currently live outside of Tucson, Arizona with my partner, two daughters, and our dog, Bear.

I myself have been through many of life's more strenuous events like divorce, personal injury, and supporting a child with special needs. I know how difficult it can feel to break old relationship patterns, but I'm here to tell you that it doesn't have to be so hard!

Follow me on Instagram [@TatianaLifeCoach](https://www.instagram.com/TatianaLifeCoach), where you can ask a question that I may answer in a post, or you can share your success story with setting a boundary. Either way, I look forward to hearing from you!